

Federal Highway Administration

Rural Transportation Planning Workshops

Kentucky Workshop

Including

Indiana

North Carolina

Tennessee

Virginia

West Virginia

FINAL DRAFT

Summer 1999

Dye Management Group, Inc.

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Road mileage data included in this report is from the Federal Highway Administration, 1996, and can be accessed at www.fhwa.dot.gov/ohim/1996/section5.html.

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Federal Highway Administration

Rural Transportation Planning Workshops

Kentucky Workshop



1.0 Introduction

The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), assisted by Dye Management Group, Inc., conducted a series of regional rural transportation planning workshops from October 1998 through July 1999. The Kentucky Transportation Cabinet hosted the fourth regional workshop on March 23-24, in Lexington.

These workshops were structured to allow the exchange of success stories and dialogue between neighboring states and their representatives on how to make rural transportation planning effective. In addition, the workshops were used to assemble information on how local elected officials are involved in the statewide transportation planning process. Officials from Indiana, Kentucky, North Carolina, Tennessee, Virginia, and West Virginia, including planning representatives, district/county engineers, local elected officials, rural planning organizations, economic development agencies, tribal governments, departments of transportation, and rural transit operators were invited to attend. The information gathered at the Kentucky workshop is presented for each state individually. Overall workshop findings and conclusions follow the state summaries.

1.1 Objectives

The purpose of the workshops was to foster dialogue and the exchange of ideas, not formal presentations. The objectives of the workshops were to:

- Explore and promote effective ways to involve rural officials in the statewide transportation planning process.
- Enable participants to share experiences in rural transportation planning and programming.
- Build relationships among participants that can form the basis for future cooperation and coordination.
- Identify the most effective roles and responsibilities for rural transportation providers and users.

- Determine rural transportation needs and issues that are being addressed by planning and programming.
- Identify best practice planning techniques used in developing successful rural projects.
- Obtain information for a report to Congress on how responsive state transportation plans and the statewide transportation planning process are to rural concerns and how rural officials are involved in the planning process.

These objectives were achieved by working through an agenda of discussion topics. Workshop participants were asked to come prepared to provide input around specific questions that they were given in advance.

1.2 Discussion Topics

Five principal discussion topics were addressed in the workshop. Knowledgeable individuals from each state, from both the state department of transportation perspective and the local rural perspective, were asked to address these discussion topics. The topics were:

- **The Process and the Outcome: How Planning for Rural Areas Is Conducted**

This topic covered the following questions:

- How is planning for rural areas conducted?
- How are rural transportation needs addressed in the development of the statewide transportation improvement program?
- How are rural officials involved in decision making?
- What do you see as the strengths and weaknesses in your state?

- **Jurisdictional Roles, Responsibilities, and Funding**

This topic covered the following questions:

- What are the jurisdictional roles and responsibilities in your state for planning, programming, and funding improvements in rural areas?
- How are plan decisions funded?

- **Integration/Coordination with Other Plans**

This topic covered the following questions:

- How are local/regional plans coordinated with other plans?

- How are local rural goals balanced against regional/statewide goals and objectives?

- **Success Stories**

This topic covered the following question:

- What success stories do you have of innovative programs and projects that address rural needs?

- **Other Issues**

This topic covered the following question:

- What are the major rural transportation issues facing rural areas in your state, for all modes?

1.3 Participants

State departments of transportation were solicited to host the rural transportation planning workshops. Based upon the response, host states were identified and nearby states were then invited to attend.

Knowledgeable individuals, from both the state department of transportation perspective and the local rural perspective, were invited to attend the workshops. The objective was to have approximately five people from each state, representing a variety of rural transportation stakeholders, actively participate in the workshop forum. Participants included local, state, and federal planning representatives; county engineers and commissioners; local elected officials; councils of governments; regional planning organizations; economic development agencies; tribal governments; and rural transit operators. National organizations represented at the workshops included the:

- Community Transportation Association of America.
- Federal Highway Administration.
- Federal Transit Administration.
- National Association of Counties.
- National Association of County Engineers.
- National Association of Development Organizations.

The local elected officials who participated in the workshops included rural mayors, county commissioners, judges/county executives, public works directors, trustees, and former state legislators.

1.4 Report Structure

The format of this report is based on the workshop objectives and topic areas, as follows:

- The Rural Planning Process.
- Programming and Funding for Rural Area Decisions.
- Major Planning Issues.
- Identified Strengths and Weaknesses.
- Success Stories.

Each of the participating states are addressed in turn. A list of workshop participants and maps of each of the states are included in the attachments.

2.0 Indiana

Indiana contains 191,743 lane miles of roads, 149,966 lane miles of which are rural, and 7,180 of these rural miles are on the National Highway System. Eighty-seven percent of rural roads are locally owned. Indiana’s rural transportation planning process is considered to be top-down.

2.1 The Rural Planning Process

Indiana has nine active regional planning councils and development districts, which are comprised of at least two-thirds local elected officials. The state was originally divided into 17 planning regions, but most never formed organizations and the ones that did do not have formal planning responsibilities. The Indiana Department of Transportation (INDOT) conducts rural transportation planning through its six district offices and five planners; one planner handles two districts. The districts work with local elected officials and gather public input at a series of meetings and an annual road show. Each district is required to have at least two public meetings a year to gather input. This information is used to build the statewide transportation improvement program (STIP) and long-range plan.

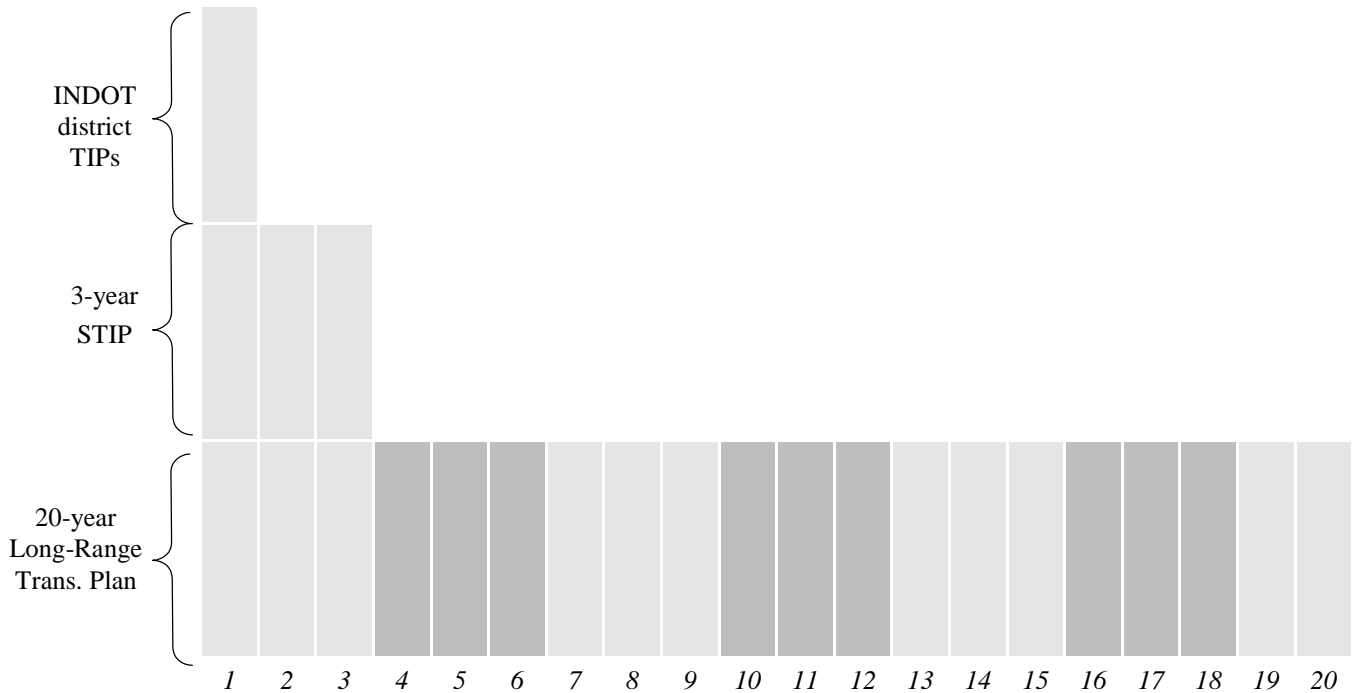
INDOT does not provide planning assistance to areas under 50,000 in population, nor does it provide funding to regional planning organizations. There is a lack of direction for transportation planning in small urban and rural areas, and therefore many such areas do not have a planning process on which to base development. However, INDOT intends to provide a manual on planning techniques for small urban and rural areas, regional planning commissions, and district development staff.

Principal Rural Planning Activities

- Studies are conducted by each INDOT district office quarterly in order to determine transportation needs, which provide a planning basis for projects. Meetings are held at the district’s discretion to gather public input.
- INDOT district offices use public and regional planning organization information to develop transportation improvement programs (TIPs).
- The six district TIPs are integrated and modified yearly to form the three-year STIP.
- During INDOT’s annual “road show” meetings are held in each district, one in the afternoon and one in the evening, to gather public input on projects and the STIP.
- The STIP becomes part of the long-range transportation plan.

Exhibit 2a illustrates Indiana’s transportation planning process.

Exhibit 2a: Rural Planning Integration in Indiana



Local Elected Official Involvement

Local elected officials may participate in the rural transportation planning process by joining their regional planning organization. County councils must be represented on regional planning commissions, and officials from the five largest municipalities must attend as well. Local elected officials are also encouraged to attend INDOT's public input meetings.

2.2 Programming and Funding for Rural Area Decisions

Funding for counties and cities is based on miles of roads, which sometimes leads to problems regarding a jurisdiction's classification of a street. In special instances, tax districts are formed to get a particular project done. However, counties typically support their roads through general county funds. Approximately 25% of federal funding goes to local governments, including metropolitan planning organizations (MPOs), for transportation purposes.

Local public agencies generally build, replace, or rehabilitate a road or bridge in one of three ways:

- *As a local project.* A local public agency can initiate, design, and construct locally with local funds.
- *As a state project.* Road or bridge work, design, and funding will be done by INDOT through the district office for projects on state, U.S., and interstate routes. The state selects and prioritizes these projects from the district highway TIP list. The regional planning organization may contribute to or make a request as to what is included in the TIP for their area, and may petition a route to be designated as a state route.
- *As a federal aid project.* If the project is on an approved federal aid route, local public agencies can apply for federal fund assistance. Projects are typically funded at 80% federal and 20% local, and are primarily major capital improvement projects.

Municipalities can also compete for part of the \$3-4 million in the local roads and assistance fund.

2.3 Major Planning Issues

The following major rural planning issues were identified during the workshop.

- In order to improve rural planning, it has been proposed to let urban boundaries include rural regions and have the MPO plan for both areas. MPOs typically have more and better planning resources, and could make up for the absence of rural planning organizations.

Rural regions are hesitant to let MPOs plan for them due to fear that they won't be fairly represented. INDOT indicates that it is likely to provide extra funding for MPO-rural regions and mandate a fair project selection criteria and prioritization process.

- INDOT has a large backlog of projects, some of which are no longer being considered for development.

INDOT has received increased funding, and is attempting to address the backlog as quickly as possible. The project selection process is also being reviewed, and some projects have been removed from the list.

2.4 Identified Strengths and Weaknesses

The following strengths and weaknesses were identified during the workshop.

Strengths

- To help with project funding, Indiana has a loan program that allows a tax-base region to receive a loan based on its revenue potential.

- Farmland preservation is becoming a planning factor, although it is not yet required by law.

Weaknesses

- There is no formal process for working with regional planning organizations, nor do they have a designated planning capacity.
- County commissioners are not in favor of sharing planning responsibilities with rural planning organizations or consultants, either of which would lessen their regional authority.
- Indiana has instituted a statewide employee reduction effort, reducing INDOT staff over the past five years. Therefore, there is a shortage of planners to do rural planning.
- Many regions have expressed concern about consultants having a strong – and often political – role in transportation planning.
- Definitions vary between local governments and the state. In one southern Indiana town, an 11-foot wide alley was classified as a local through street for funding.
- INDOT is reactive concerning economic development. By providing infrastructure, INDOT is making a statement about growth that may be contrary to philosophy increasingly held by citizens.

2.5 Success Stories

In order to encourage economic development and increase their traffic counts, rural counties in southern Indiana have begun promoting riverboats. With the higher traffic counts local jurisdictions – which were previously criticized by urban areas for wanting to take away funding for low-volume roads – can justify building new roads to INDOT.

3.0 Kentucky

Kentucky contains 151,606 lane miles of roads, 129,908 lane miles of which are rural, and 7,424 of these rural miles are on the National Highway System. Sixty percent of rural roads are locally owned. Kentucky's rural transportation planning process is considered to be bottom-up.

3.1 The Rural Planning Process

Kentucky has 15 area development districts, consisting of five to 17 counties apiece. Each area development district is responsible for the creation and maintenance of a regional transportation council, which identifies needs and prioritizes highway projects to provide input to the Kentucky Transportation Cabinet's (KYTC) unscheduled needs list. The unscheduled needs list is a database of all highway projects submitted to the KYTC. The area development districts are also responsible for consulting with county and city officials to identify and prioritize projects.

Sometimes local county transportation committees are formed to provide additional input. Both the regional councils and committees consist of local elected officials and representatives from land use planning, zoning, law enforcement, emergency services, schools, economic development, tourism, transit, community action, multimodal organizations, and transportation disadvantaged groups.

The KYTC contracts with the area development districts annually to provide funds for at least one staff person in each district to undertake rural transportation planning. The KYTC also allocates approximately \$1 million annually for the districts, distributed in part on the number of counties in that region; payments are made on a quarterly basis. (State funding is made available for the area development districts by the General Assembly through the General Fund and Road Fund. At this time, no federal funds are provided to the area development districts.) The annual work program charges the area development districts with the following tasks:

- Maintaining a transportation advisory committee to guide program development and provide public input.
- Consulting with local elected officials.
- Coordinating with regional agencies and interests.
- Initiating public involvement efforts.
- Developing a regional transportation concept plan to identify major issues and projects of concern to the region.
- Performing special local and regional projects.
- Identifying and prioritizing highway needs on a biennial cycle.

- Attending bimonthly meetings with KYTC staff for education, information exchange, and work-related discussions.
- Participating in other KYTC activities as needed, such as data collection or review and input for special studies.

Kentucky is divided into 16 regions for transit planning purposes, whose boundaries do not coincide with those of the 12 KYTC highway districts or 15 area development districts.

Principal Rural Planning Activities

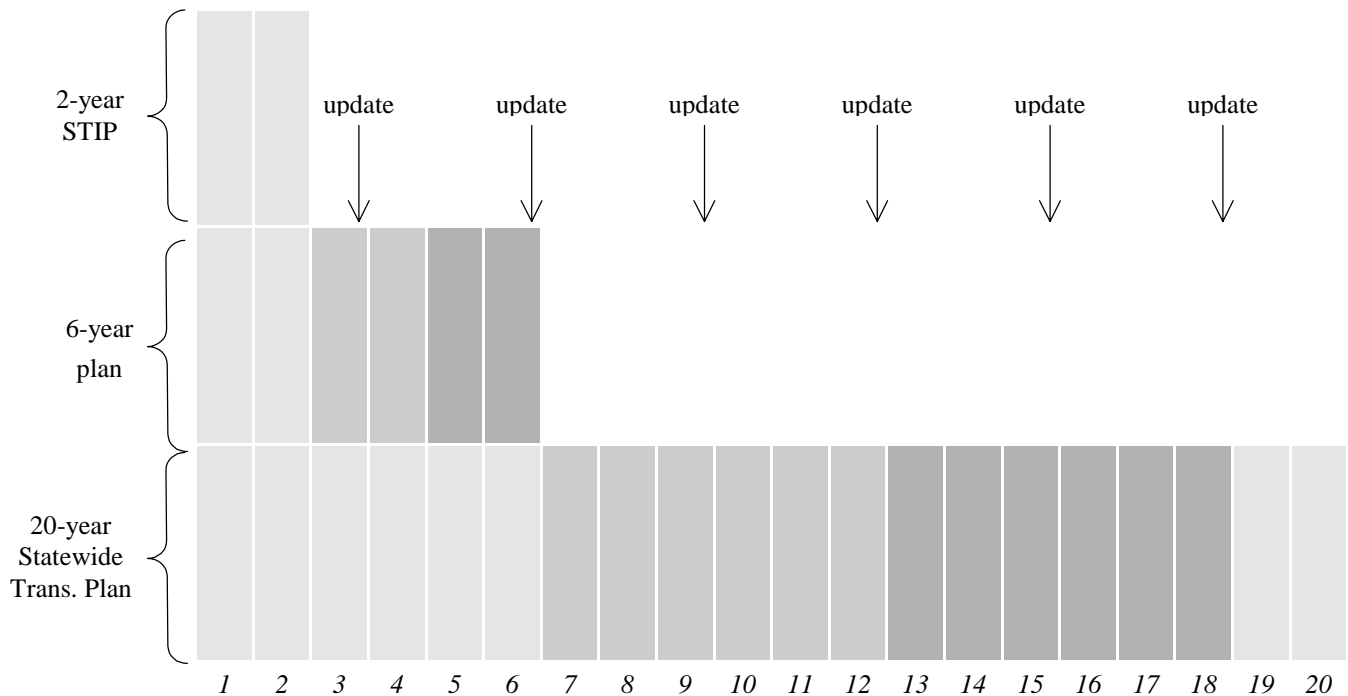
- The area development districts gather public, technical, and political input on transportation need.
- The KYTC meets bi-monthly with the area development districts and monthly with its district offices to provide education for area development district staff on transportation issues and programs, exchange information on transportation issues and needs, and provide direction to the area development districts in carrying out tasks in their annual work programs.
- Every two years area development district staff meet with county and city officials to review projects already in the unscheduled needs database and to identify needs on the state-maintained highway system that have not been previously identified. These needs are then defined into projects and placed on the unscheduled needs list.
- Cost estimates for all proposed projects are prepared by the KYTC highway districts or Division of Planning staff. When all projects have been properly defined and cost estimates prepared, a list of projects is sent to each area development district.
- The area development district staff then meet again with local officials, who are asked to prioritize projects from a local perspective as high, medium, or low. The area development district transportation advisory committees also do these same tasks from a regional perspective.
- To ensure a sense of fiscal constraint, based on estimated available funds, local officials and the regional advisory committees are each asked to use the total dollar amount for all projects in each city, county, or region and divide it into thirds. Each geographical unit is then asked to make sure that approximately one-third of the cost of all projects is placed in each of the high, medium, and low priority groups. Each area development district also identifies its top ten projects from a regional perspective.
- A similar process is used to get input from the 12 KYTC highway districts.

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- Projects are then selected by the KYTC to move from the unscheduled needs list into the Statewide Transportation Plan every four years; projects are selected from this plan biennially for the state’s six-year highway plan.
- The six-year highway plan is submitted to the Governor and General Assembly for approval biennially.
- The six-year highway plan becomes part of the project-based, long-range transportation plan and is the basis for highway projects included in the STIP for submittal to the FHWA.

Exhibit 3a illustrates Kentucky’s transportation planning process.

Exhibit 3a: Rural Planning Integration in Kentucky



Local Elected Official Involvement

Input from local elected officials is proactively sought biennially to submit and prioritize highway needs for their jurisdictional boundaries. Local elected officials are also encouraged to participate in the rural transportation planning process through their area development district. Each area development district has two sub-groups: a transportation advisory council that includes local elected officials, and a governing board of directors that consists predominantly of county judges, mayors, and other local elected officials.

3.2 Programming and Funding for Rural Area Decisions

The KYTC provides implementation and planning funds. Planning funds, such as general funds and road funds, are earmarked to the area development districts for the planning process and are used to help make decisions for the funding of state projects in rural areas. Implementation funds are those that the county can use to implement highway improvements. Two main implementation funding programs are as follows:

- The County Road Aid Program distributes a five-cent gas tax revenue to counties monthly, based on a formula considering population, rural road miles, rural land area, and equal shares. This money may be passed on to cities by the counties.
- The Rural and Municipal Aid Program requires an annual contract on behalf of the county judge or executive, who distributes the funding at his or her discretion.

Some counties also receive revenue from a coal severance tax, based on their coal truck traffic, for road maintenance.

Approximately \$2 million is provided for transit and mobility programs annually.

3.3 Major Planning Issues

The following major rural planning issues were identified during the workshop.

- Despite their success with few resources, the KYTC cannot hire additional state staff in the Division of Planning or in the highway districts due to legislative staff restrictions.

The KYTC is evaluating whether or not to contract out work. The KYTC believes the area development districts have a local connection that a consultant couldn't replicate.

- Area development district, KYTC highway district, and transit region boundaries are all different.

Planners for the state highway districts must attend extra meetings due to overlapping borders, typically attending two or three area development district transportation committee meetings bimonthly at different locations. However, there are good lines of communication between the area development districts, KYTC highway districts, and the KYTC central office staffs, which meet regularly as a group on a bi-monthly basis. Poor communication was only cited with modes such as rail and aviation.

3.4 Identified Strengths and Weaknesses

The following strengths and weaknesses were identified during the workshop.

Strengths

- Area development districts have significantly increased involvement for rural transportation planning.
- Once in the six-year highway plan, projects are virtually guaranteed to be completed. Nine out of ten transportation projects funded result in part from area development district planning input.
- Local elected officials are moving away from a local viewpoint and are beginning to have a regional planning perspective.
- Rural transit services are integrated through an agreement between the KYTC and three other state human services cabinets, thereby reducing duplication and streamlining services. A broker is appointed to each region to coordinate programs.

Weaknesses

- Coordination needs to be improved between MPOs and area development districts, as well as between different modes.

3.5 Success Stories

- The short-span bridge replacement program has enabled hundreds of bridges to be built since 1970. To be eligible for replacement the county must hire state-approved contractors, follow state construction standards, and use already prepared plans and drawings. A 50-foot long bridge, for example, will have a cost of approximately \$100-1400 per linear foot.
- Kentucky's rural public transportation mobility network, multi-cabinet agreement, funding, and services are considered exemplary and beyond those of other states. Although the transit districts have different boundaries from those of the KYTC and development districts, they are thought to be beneficial and not a hindrance. A broker is appointed to each transit district to coordinate services and interface between the KYTC's multi-cabinet supervisory panel and local service providers. Many regions have access to public transportation seven days a week, 24 hours a day, due to combined efforts and improved planning.

4.0 North Carolina

North Carolina contains 204,132 lane miles of roads, 154,626 lane miles of which are rural, and 8,723 of these rural miles are on the National Highway System. Five percent of rural roads are locally owned. North Carolina's rural transportation planning process is becoming bottom-up.

4.1 The Rural Planning Process

North Carolina has 18 councils of governments, which currently have no formal or specific planning duties. Some councils of governments, however, have taken steps to be involved in the transportation planning process. They created internal groups to specifically address transportation issues, interface with the North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT), and on occasion enter into partnership. These groups include the following:

- Rural Transportation Planning Organizations address transportation issues on a regional basis and coordinates with local governments in setting transportation priorities.
- Transportation Advisory Committees, consisting of county commissioners and mayors, serve as a forum for cooperative transportation planning and decision making for the Regional Transportation Planning Organization. The committees also keep county commissioners, town councils, and local governments informed of the planning process.
- Transportation Technical Committees – consisting of municipal managers, clerks, and planners – develop, review, and recommend programs and projects to local, state, and federal agencies.

As prescribed by the legislature, NCDOT is decentralizing and reorganizing its planning process. It is in the process of defining transportation planning responsibilities and membership guidelines for regional planning organizations, and deciding whether to use the existing councils of governments framework or create new jurisdictions. The department is surveying both regional planning organization representatives and citizens to help determine their course of action – including whether to use the existing boundaries and groups, or a blend of new and old. Counties are prohibited by North Carolina statute to be involved in transportation, except to purchase right-of-way.

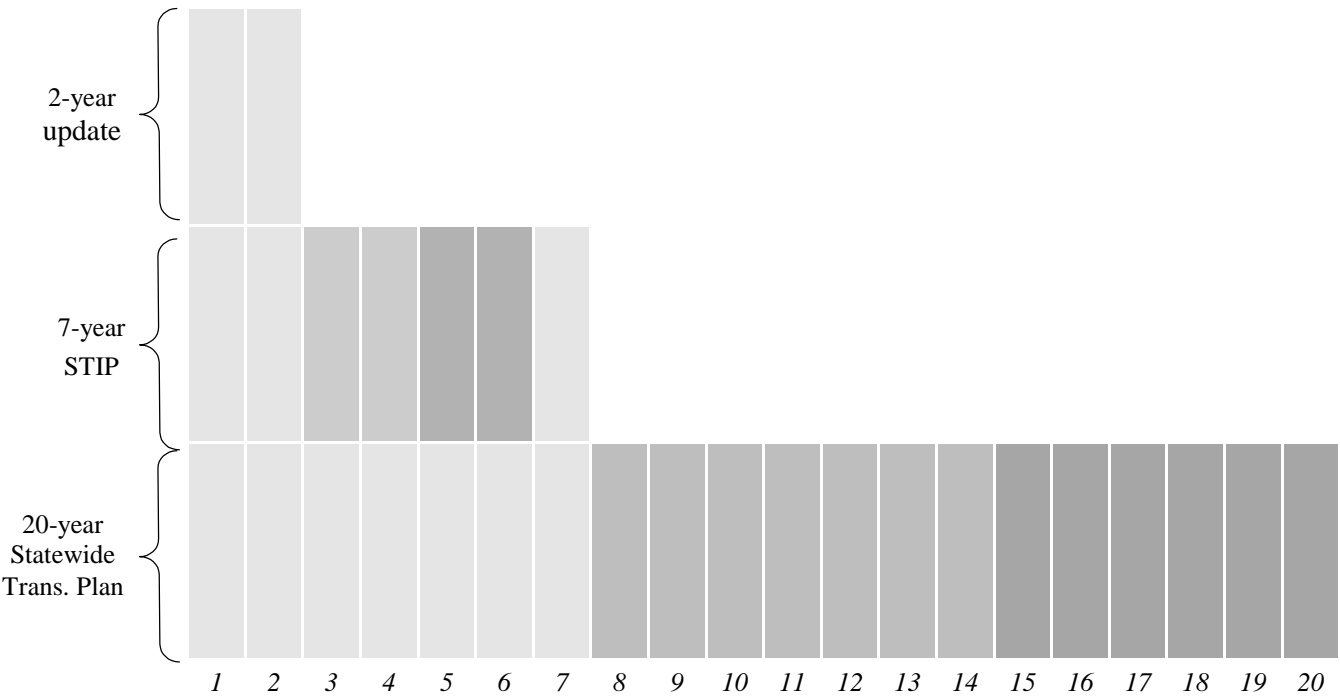
The Statewide Transportation Planning Committee develops the long-range, multi-modal transportation plan for North Carolina. The committee consists of NCDOT, the FHWA, MPOs, and other state department representatives.

Principal Rural Planning Activities

- Councils of governments may gather input on transportation needs and forward them to NCDOT for inclusion in the seven-year STIP.
- Every two years NCDOT goes to each of the 14 districts and publicizes the STIP update for requests and input, and tries to address needs.
- The STIP is forwarded to the Board of Transportation for approval.
- The Statewide Transportation Planning Committee incorporates the STIP into the long-range plan.

Exhibit 4a illustrates North Carolina’s transportation planning process.

Exhibit 4a: Rural Planning Integration in North Carolina



Local Elected Official Involvement

Local elected officials may participate in the rural transportation planning process by working with the councils of governments and participating on the advisory or technical committees. Their role in planning may be expanded and formalized in the future with

NCDOT's decentralization effort. Local elected officials may also influence rural transportation planning by attending NCDOT district meetings for input on needs and project prioritization.

4.2 Programming and Funding for Rural Area Decisions

To distribute state and federal transportation funds, NCDOT pairs its districts into seven funding regions and then uses an allocation formula based 50% on population, 25% on intrastate system miles, and 25% on equal shares.

North Carolina's Municipal Aid Program distributes approximately \$110 million to municipalities every fall based on their state road miles. No funding is set aside for counties.

NCDOT also has a policy to pave all dirt roads with a count of 50 or more vehicles per day, as funding is available. The roads are scored with criteria, and paved in order.

4.3 Major Planning Issues

The following major rural planning issues were identified during the workshop.

- In order to facilitate planning and pool resources, some rural areas allowed nearby MPOs to expand their boundaries and include their regions.

Many rural towns have regretted this action, as the MPOs have assumed all the planning authority and do not always plan in the best interests of rural regions. Rural representatives were often told by the transportation board to only work through the MPOs, but were then ignored at MPO meetings. NCDOT's reorganization effort is considering this problem.

- Councils of governments did not have control over projects in their regions.

NCDOT is addressing this in its decentralization process and consulting with other states about the extent of duties assigned to regional planning organizations. However, councils of governments can request assistance from NCDOT for local planning, conduct meetings to gather local input, and work in a partnership on project development.

4.4 Identified Strengths and Weaknesses

The following strengths and weaknesses were identified during the workshop.

Strengths

- NCDOT is surveying transportation stakeholders and local elected officials about the desired membership, responsibilities, and organization of future transportation planning groups.
- NCDOT adheres to both state and federal mandates in order to have flexibility and be able to shift funding sources from one to the other, something that wouldn't be possible if they relied heavily on federal aid.
- Each county must have a consolidated transit plan in order to be eligible for Section 18 funds. As a result, mobility services are more integrated – seniors ride with students, Medicaid recipients ride with the disabled, etc. In addition, NCDOT has assigned public transportation planners to each region to help coordinate services.

Weaknesses

- North Carolina has numerous transportation commissioners, sometimes making consensus difficult to achieve and convoluting the planning process.
- The Board of Transportation has final approval/denial on all transportation projects and decisions.

4.5 Success Stories

The Region D Thoroughfare Plan was the first major plan developed by a council of governments to be approved by NCDOT. The plan is actually a series of seven county-level thoroughfare plans that were designed to integrate with existing municipal thoroughfare plans. NCDOT created a new traffic flow modeling procedure specifically for this project, and planned 30 years ahead for the regional thoroughfare.

5.0 Tennessee

Tennessee contains 179,547 lane miles of roads, 140,264 lane miles of which are rural, and 7,164 of these rural miles are on the National Highway System. Eighty-three percent of rural roads are locally owned. Tennessee's rural transportation planning process is considered to be top-down.

5.1 The Rural Planning Process

Tennessee has nine development districts, each with four to 16 counties, which generally consist of local elected officials and local agency representatives. They have no defined role in transportation planning, as the Tennessee Department of Transportation (TnDOT) and the transportation commissioner handle all planning. Some development districts adjacent to MPOs are more aggressive in providing transportation input. However, TnDOT is evaluating how to consult with local governments and the development districts. A five-point strategic plan guides the decentralization effort, with goals to:

- Develop a needs-based planning process.
- Create a task force to integrate different modes for planning.
- Complete the pavement management system.
- Develop a needs-based long-range transportation plan.
- Develop a five-year list of top projects.

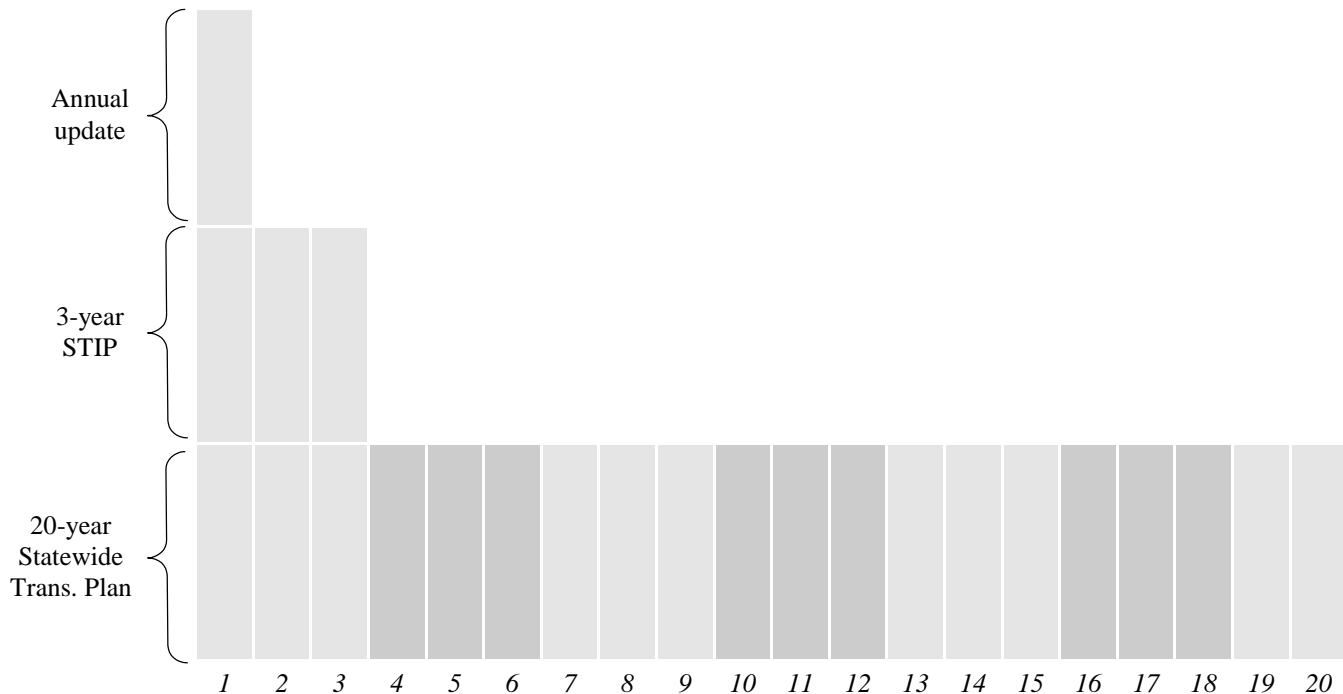
Development districts do not currently receive funding from TnDOT for planning, but can seek assistance from the University of Tennessee. TnDOT does not supply the development districts with staff either, although state staff are available for assistance.

Principal Rural Planning Activities

- Projects are identified by TnDOT management after receiving recommendations from local elected officials and legislators.
- The program is then approved by the legislature every spring and becomes part of the three-year STIP.

Exhibit 5a illustrates Tennessee's transportation planning process.

Exhibit 5a: Rural Planning Integration in Tennessee



Local Elected Official Involvement

Local elected officials may participate in the rural transportation planning process by recommending projects to TnDOT for inclusion in the STIP; otherwise, there is no formal process for involvement. Local elected officials may also influence transportation planning by approaching the transportation commissioner or their legislators.

5.2 Programming and Funding for Rural Area Decisions

Funding is distributed by TnDOT and the legislature on a project basis. A small portion of state transportation funds, about \$10 million, is distributed to the counties. Basically, state funds are spent on the state system, county funds on the county system, and so on. Funding for the surface transportation program (STP) and bridge program is allocated at the state level.

5.3 Major Planning Issues

The following major rural planning issues were identified during the workshop.

- Projects are often included in the STIP and designed, but never constructed.

Needs-based planning would remove political elements from the project selection process and improve the viability of the STIP. A team of TnDOT, FHWA, and other representatives is currently addressing this change.

- There is no formal process for integrating plans from different modes. For example, the aeronautics division has made extensive plans, which haven't been incorporated into the statewide one yet.

TnDOT's decentralization addresses the need to integrate plans across modes. A task force has been created to evaluate the best process for coordinating planning efforts among the different agencies, and has three goals:

- Develop tools and resources to do multimodal needs-based planning (including stakeholder involvement).
- Develop a long-range revenue forecast.
- Develop a list of committed projects.

5.4 Identified Strengths and Weaknesses

The following strengths and weaknesses were identified during the workshop.

Strengths

- Recent land use regulations require every municipality and county to develop land use designations. If they don't, the state will draw up plans for them. If they don't adhere to their plans, Tennessee will withhold funding.

Weaknesses

- TnDOT's project selection process for the STIP is generally politically driven and not needs-based.
- Communication with MPOs could be improved; there is little coordinating of plans between urban areas, non-urban regions, and the state.

5.5 Success Stories

Public dissatisfaction with urban sprawl and passive zoning prompted the legislature to pass comprehensive land use regulations and growth management policies.

6.0 Virginia

Virginia contains 149,964 lane miles of roads, 107,301 lane miles of which are rural, and 8,399 of these rural miles are on the National Highway System. One percent of rural roads are locally owned. Virginia's rural transportation planning process is considered to be bottom-up.

6.1 The Rural Planning Process

Virginia has 21 planning district commissions, of which 19 are at least partially rural and two are urban. The Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) contracts with the commissions annually to assist with transportation planning work elements.

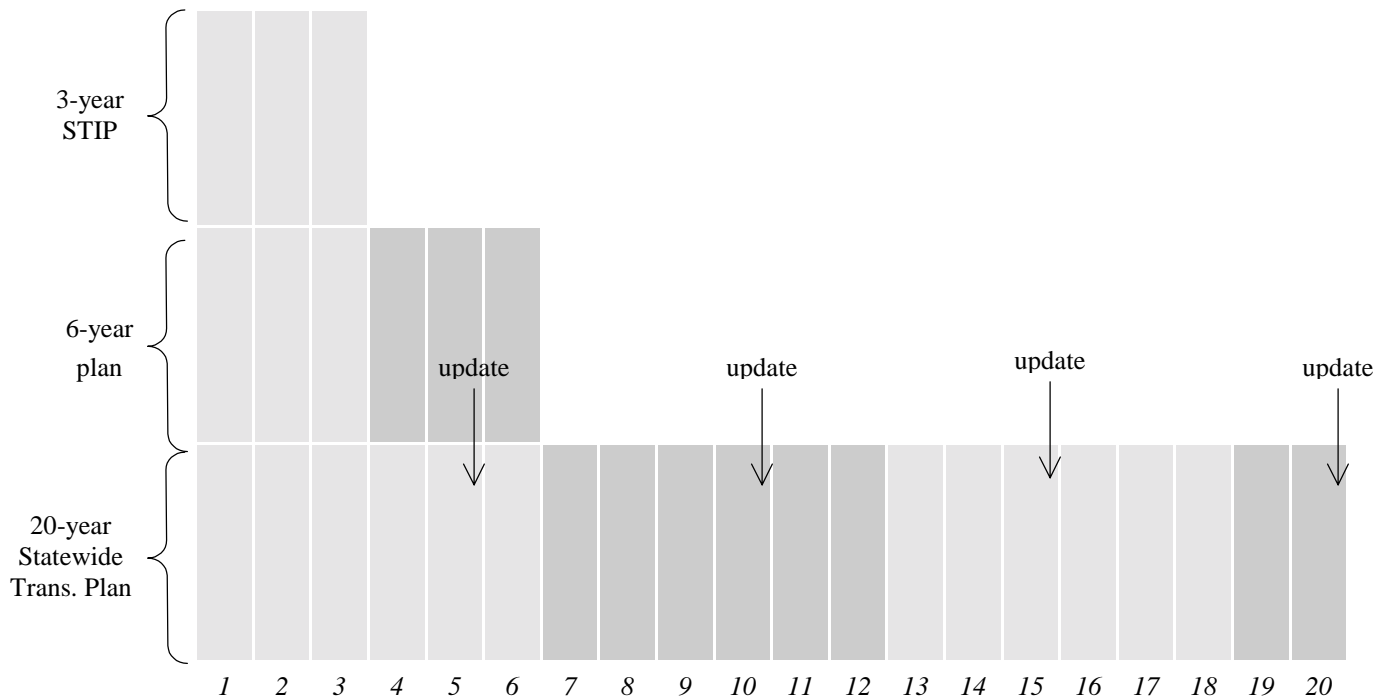
VDOT provides each planning district commission \$40,000 annually through a planning assistance program, which must be locally matched at 20% to provide a total of \$50,000. In addition, commissions can compete for \$200,000 in grants from the Rural Transportation Planning Grant Program for special projects. Winning applications are selected by representatives from VDOT, the FHWA, and the Virginia Association of Planning District Commissions.

Virginia has 98 counties and many have their own planning departments. The VDOT resident engineers have a local rural perspective and help each county prioritize their needs.

Principal Rural Planning Activities

- By state law, the long-range plan, which is needs- and project-based, must be updated every five years.
- Each county holds at least one public hearing a year for input on the secondary system. The board of supervisors of each county, assisted by the VDOT resident engineer, assesses the projects and needs for the local transportation system and prioritizes them. Projects are included in each county's secondary roadway six-year improvement program as funding allows. The plan is updated every year.
- Public hearings are held in the spring by Commonwealth Transportation Board regarding the prioritization of needs for the interstate, primary and urban systems. These prioritized needs are included in the six-year improvement program as funding permits. The hearings are attended by elected officials and citizens.

Exhibit 6a illustrates Virginia's transportation planning process.

Exhibit 6a: Rural Planning Integration in Virginia***Local Elected Official Involvement***

Local elected officials are encouraged to participate in the rural transportation planning and programming process.

6.2 Programming and Funding for Rural Area Decisions

VDOT allocates or grants funds to counties and municipalities through a number of specific programs:

- *Federal minimum guarantee funds.* Distributed statewide by grants.
- *Enhancement.* Ten percent of federal STP funds are distributed statewide by grants based on project eligibility through a competitive process.
- *Safety.* Ten percent of federal STP funds are distributed statewide by competition and accident history.
- *Interstate construction.* Distributed statewide based on need.

- *Primary construction and maintenance.* Allocated by formula to construction districts, based on lane miles, vehicle miles traveled, and need factor. Projects are prioritized within each district.
- *Secondary construction and maintenance.* Allocated by formula to counties, based on population and land area. Projects are prioritized by the county board of supervisors and VDOT resident engineer.
- *Urban construction and maintenance.* Allocated by formula to municipalities, based on population, lane miles, etc. Projects are prioritized locally.
- *Revenue sharing.* Distributed to counties.
- *Recreational access.* Up to \$3.0 million allocated annually statewide based on eligibility.
- *Industrial, airport, and rail access.* Up to \$5.5 million allocated annually based on eligibility.
- *Special access fund.* Emergency funding to meet unexpected economic development needs.

In addition, local governments and planning district commissions can compete for transit funds from seven statewide programs.

6.3 Major Planning Issues

The following major rural planning issues were identified during the workshop.

- The secondary roads fund for the counties is nominal. The unpaved secondary roads paving process is based on 50 or more vehicles per day based on available funds. (Counties can also use their normal secondary funds for paving unpaved roads.) County officials determine the prioritization of these projects.

Efforts are underway to revise the secondary roads program, improve funding, and create a priority system.

6.4 Identified Strengths and Weaknesses

The following strengths and weaknesses were identified during the workshop.

Strengths

- There is a lot of confidence in the planning district commissions, which have good communications with VDOT project managers.

- When planning district commissions were designated in 1968, Virginia asked the counties to group themselves. The state intended to have 20 commissions, but now have 21.
- VDOT transportation planning activities occur at corridor, jurisdictional, regional, and statewide levels.
- Planning district commissions are able to address jurisdictional and regional planning.
- There is a strong push by VDOT to use intelligent transportation systems (ITS) to assist in solving transportation problems by enhancing the performance of the current system.

Weaknesses

- Growth management efforts are incomplete. Traffic congestion is a top source of complaints in northern Virginia which, due to previous growth management policy, allowed only a few roads to be constructed.
- Planning district commissions with urban centers have more influence, and their planning process is smoother and more flexible.
- Virginia is constrained in terms of revenue and funding. Projects are completed on a “pay-as-you-go” basis; if money isn’t in the bank, the project isn’t started.

6.5 Success Stories

The planning district commissions have been more active and educated in their regional planning studies. Projects are not only completed faster, but the commissions have acquired a regional and corridor-wide perspective in their efforts.

7.0 West Virginia

West Virginia contains 72,255 lane miles of roads, 65,404 lane miles of which are rural, and 4,471 of these rural miles are on the National Highway System. Two percent of rural roads are locally owned. West Virginia's rural transportation planning process is considered to be top-down.

7.1 The Rural Planning Process

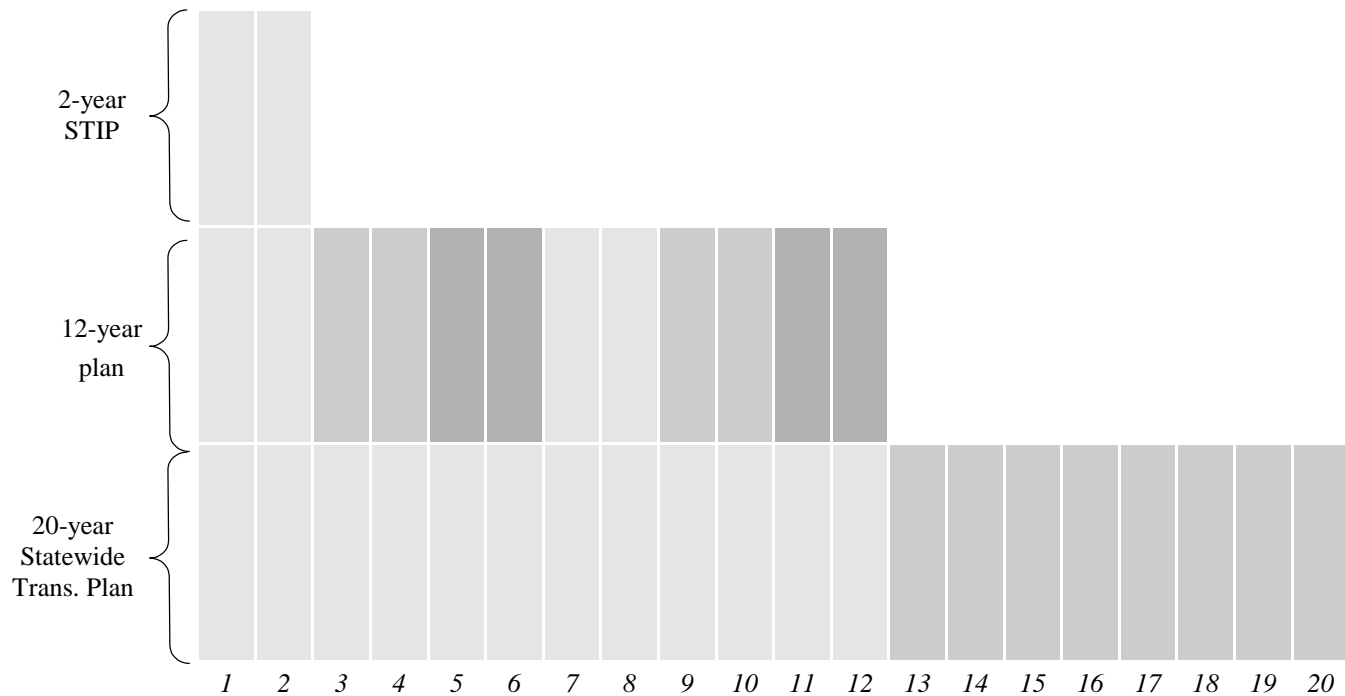
West Virginia has eight planning development commissions, which are generally not involved in transportation planning. Some counties are covered by MPO-based planning organizations, although they are mostly located in neighboring states and have no formal role in the statewide planning process. The MPOs include adjacent counties in their economic development plan, which has a transportation chapter.

The West Virginia Department of Transportation (WVDOT) develops plans through its ten highway districts and in conjunction with the counties. Each county is assigned a WVDOT road supervisor, who reports to the district maintenance engineer. Every year WVDOT updates a few county plans, depending upon funding available. The state also relies on consultants to gather transportation planning input.

Principal Rural Planning Activities

- The highway districts and counties gather public input about transportation needs and planning priorities. Each county's WVDOT road supervisor relays needs to the WVDOT district engineer, who passes it on to WVDOT headquarters.
- As funding allows, WVDOT staff work with counties on their transportation plans.
- WVDOT and transportation consultants develop the two-year STIP and send it to the districts and planning development commissions for review. Typically very little input is returned by the commissions.
- The project-based STIP then becomes part of the policy-based 12-year plan, along with plans from other modes. The 12-year plan, in turn, becomes part of the long-range statewide plan.

Exhibit 7a illustrates West Virginia's transportation planning process.

Exhibit 7a: Rural Planning Integration in West Virginia***Local Elected Official Involvement***

Local elected officials may participate in the transportation planning process by joining an MPO transportation advisory committee, or by attending and providing input at WVDOT meetings.

7.2 Programming and Funding for Rural Area Decisions

WVDOT oversees and maintains all roads, and no funding is distributed to the counties or other jurisdictions. Some larger cities own a few of their own roads, which they fund by bonding.

7.3 Major Planning Issues

The following major rural planning issues were identified during the workshop.

- Land use planning and growth management are unpopular subjects, and are viewed as barriers in regions where economic development is the primary goal.

People are moving from urban to rural areas and educating others in the need for land use regulation. WVDOT and the FHWA are also educating local governments, which have inordinate weight and power in land use decisions, about growth management.

7.4 Identified Strengths and Weaknesses

The following strengths and weaknesses were identified during the workshop.

Strengths

- Plans for all modes except transit are well-integrated and coordinated at the 12-year and long-range plans level. WVDOT coordinates transit planning through its public transportation division.

Weaknesses

- There are many policy conflicts. For example, rural areas want to develop tourism but decrease the amount of road traffic.
- Transit planning is reactive and not proactive. Local elected officials and the public often don't consider transit until they need it, like emergency services.

7.5 Success Stories

There is little, if any, disagreement between WVDOT and the planning commissions on transportation priorities and project selection. WVDOT staff work directly with the public to gather needs input.

8.0 Workshop Findings and Conclusions

8.1 Similarities

Consensus was reached by the Kentucky workshop participants in many areas, most notably regarding public involvement, project development, and funding. These agreements are listed below.

- When provided the opportunity and forum, citizens take full advantage to offer input on transportation planning issues.
- Citizens can generally prevent undesirable projects or realize desired ones.
- Rural planning organizations are an effective tool in educating the public on transportation and development issues.
- Rural planning organizations must compete with metropolitan areas for money, with the department of transportation acting as arbitrator and distributor of funds. MPOs may include rural regions in their planning process, but only in theory and not action.
- Communities crave the benefits of economic development, which affects their planning policies, yet strive to maintain local character and control growth.
- Short-range plans are project-based, and long-term plans policy-based. Plans from different modes typically are not integrated until the long-term stage.
- Both organizations and the departments look forward to the increased use of intelligent transportation systems.

8.2 Differences

Differences between the states were also noted, which tended to center on governmental organization and the programming process. These differences are listed below:

- States vary from taking a top-down approach to rural planning – like West Virginia, which owns most of the roads and makes project decisions – to states that have an established bottom-up approach, such as Kentucky.
- Some rural planning organizations struggle to find planning funds and a defined role in transportation planning, while others are provided with more extensive resources and responsibilities.

- Some rural planning organizations have a purely consultative role, while others actively develop, plan, and program their transportation projects and may even oversee some funding.
- There is a wide variation in the extent to which rural planning organizations have evolved. In some states they are scattered and passive at best, while in others they are well-structured and aggressive.

Attachment A. Participants

Kentucky Workshop

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FINAL DRAFT

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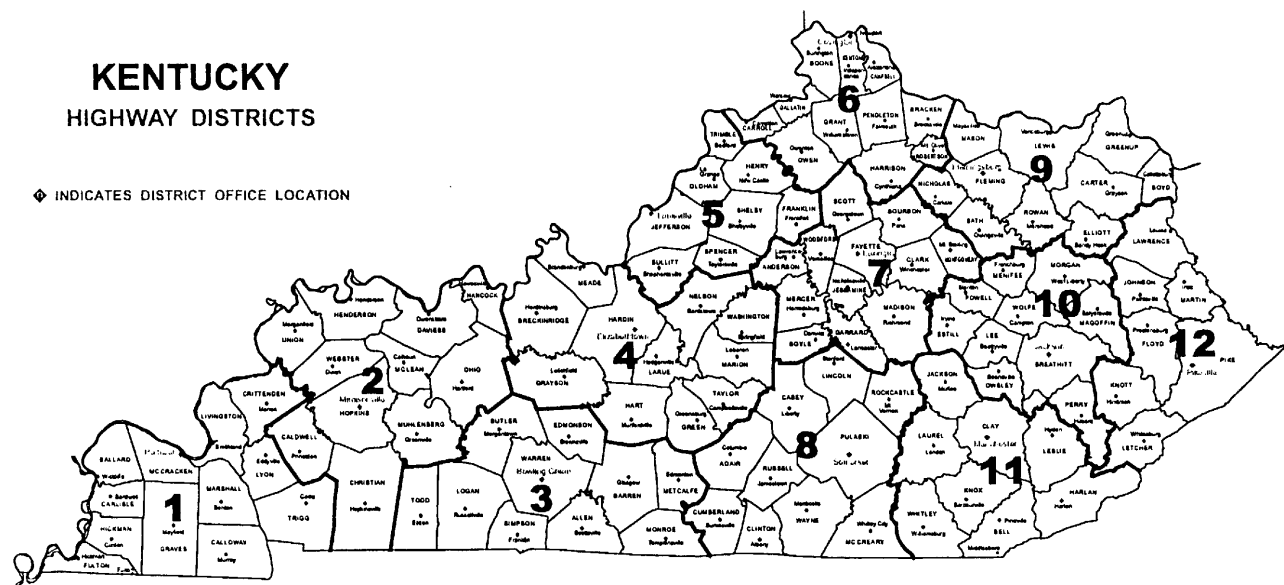
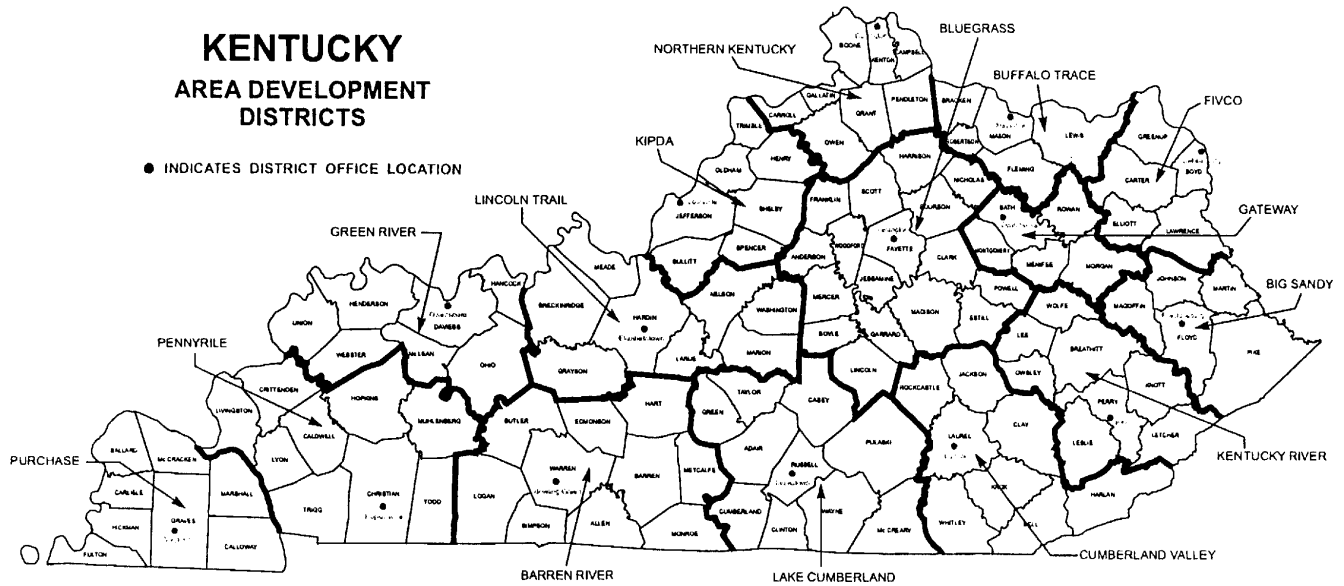
Indiana

Regional planning commissions

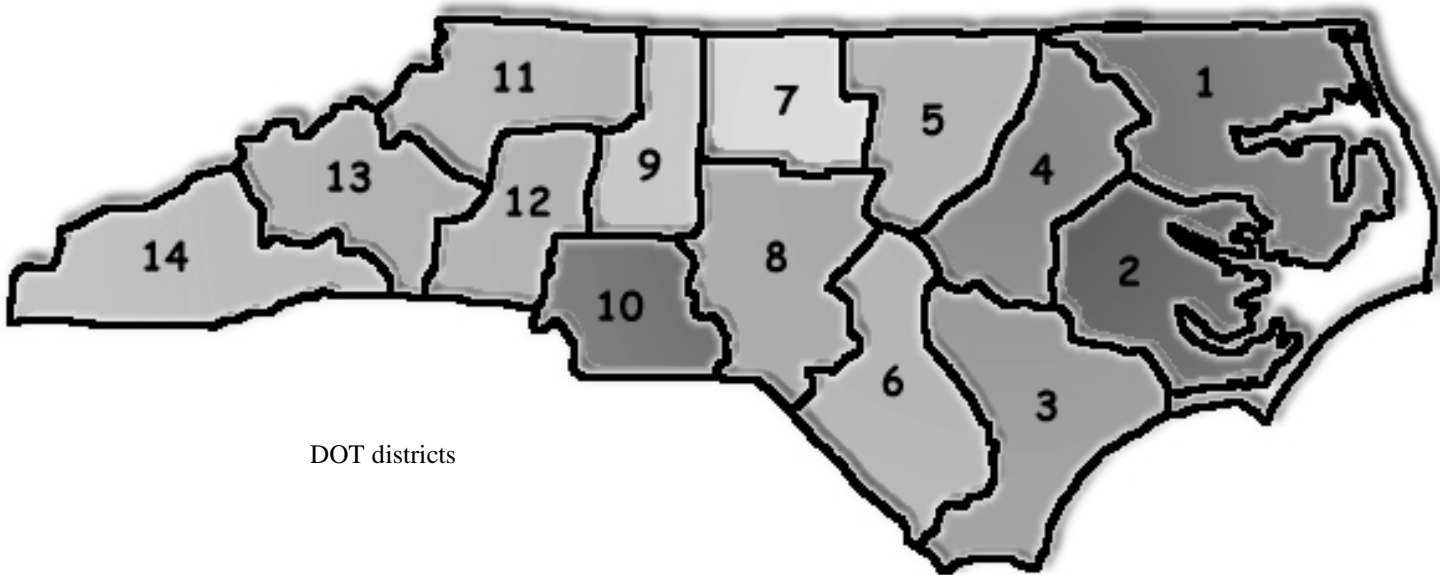


- Economic Development Districts
1. Indiana 15 R.P.C.
 2. Kankakee-Incquois R.P.C.
 3. Region III-A Dev. and R.P.C.
 4. River Hills E.D.D. and R.P.C.
 5. Southeastern Indiana R.P.C.
 6. Southern Indiana Dev. Comm.
 7. West Central Indiana E.D.D.
- △—University Center
1. Indiana University

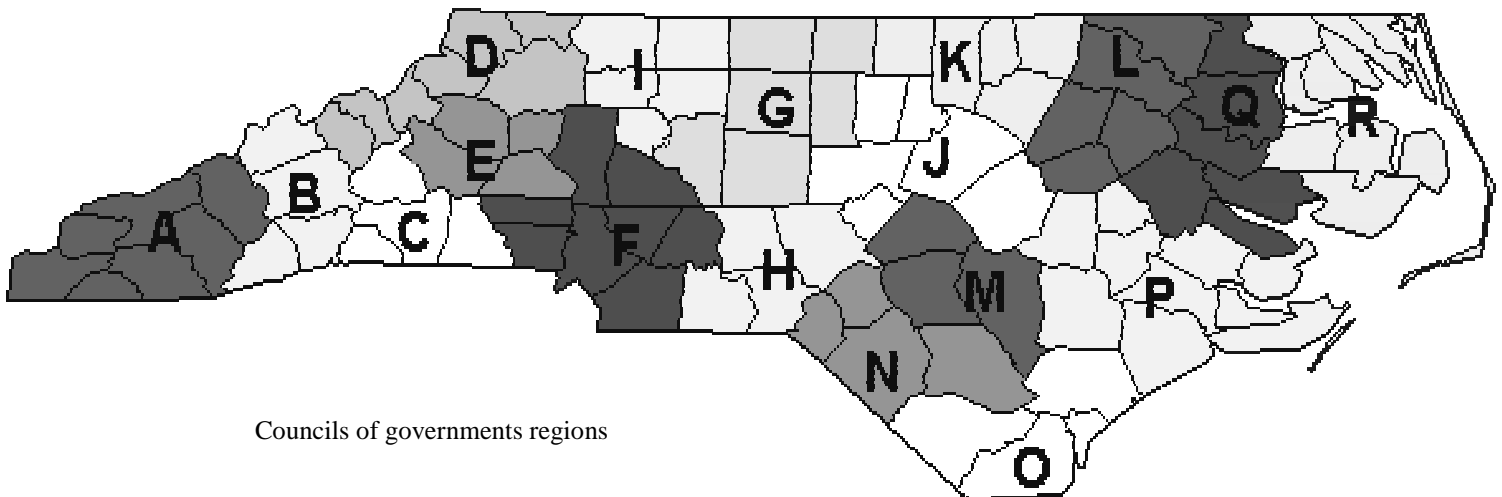
Kentucky



North Carolina



DOT districts

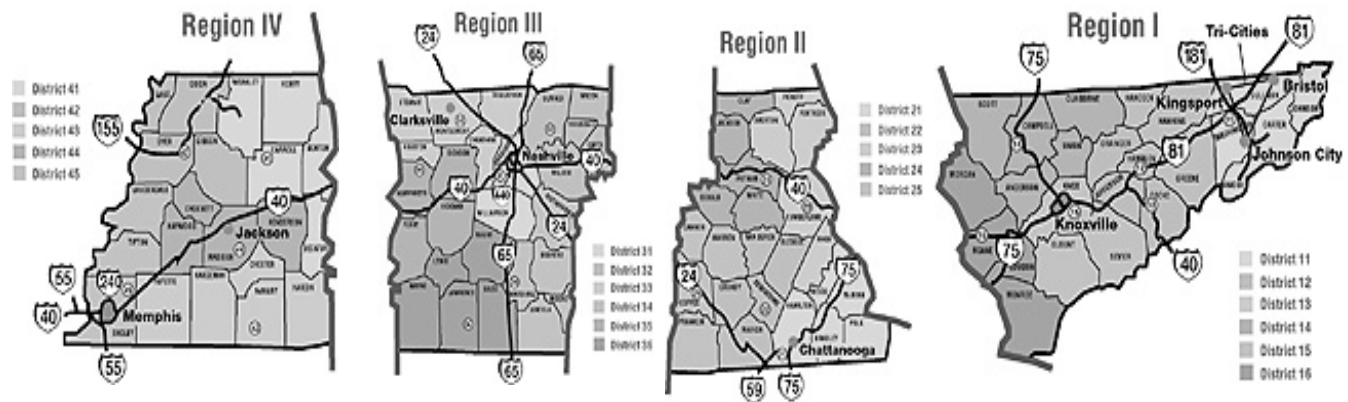


Councils of governments regions

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Tennessee

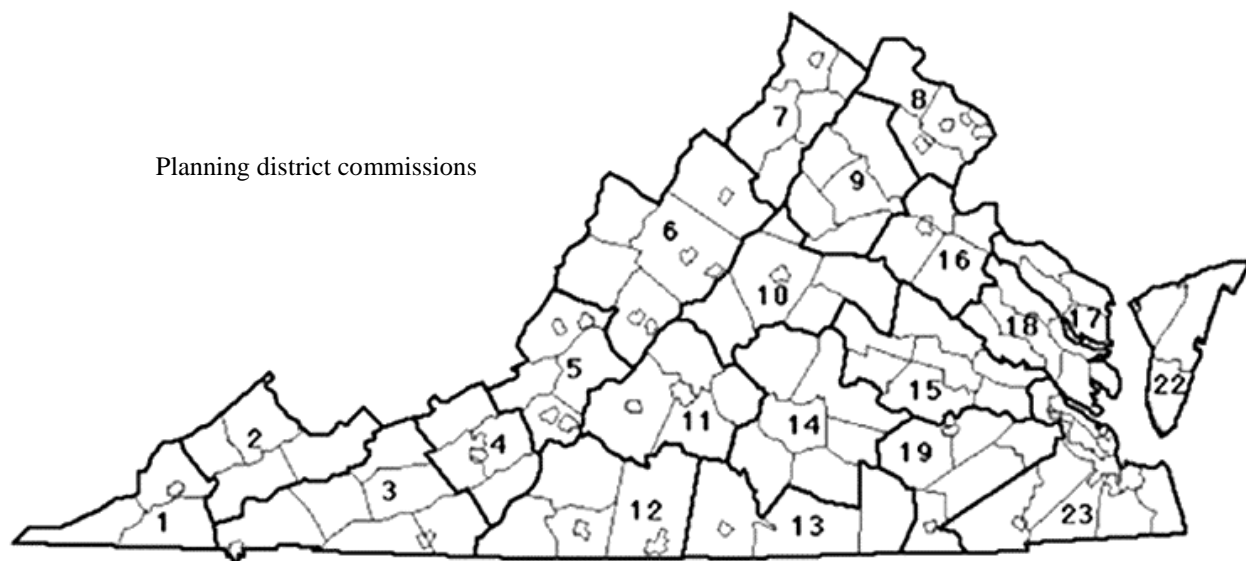
DOT districts



Development districts



Virginia



DOT districts

